

Understaffed and underdigitalized The struggle to update the museum



Dr. Dennis Beckmann

Head curator

Museum der Deutschen
Binnenschifffahrt

Duisburg, Germany

A presentation for the ENORM conference 2023, Basel, Switzerland
„Challenges for museums. Problems and solutions“

Introduction: The city of Duisburg



- Where the Ruhr meets the Rhine, industrial heart of Germany
- (post-) industrial economy
- 500.000 inhabitants, high unemployment
- Biggest inland harbour in Europe by turnover, biggest in the world by length of quay wall
- Rigorous policy of saving from early 2000 onwards
- Less money for culture (two municipal museums)

Medium sized museum



- 20.000 registered objects
- exhibition in three buildings, three floors each
- five big boats and ships
- a library, an archive, five depot rooms

Small team

- Position of director vacant from 2020-2024
- Two colleagues on long term sick leave
- Scientific and administrative work done by one curator and one graduate trainee
- Part time employees in library, archive and public relations
- Free lancers for the guided tours





Challenges we face ... maybe you do, too

- Collection not fully organised, permanent exhibition deserves more time
- PR and outreach lag behind, minimal social media interaction
- Library and archive overcrowded, sources almost inaccessible to the public



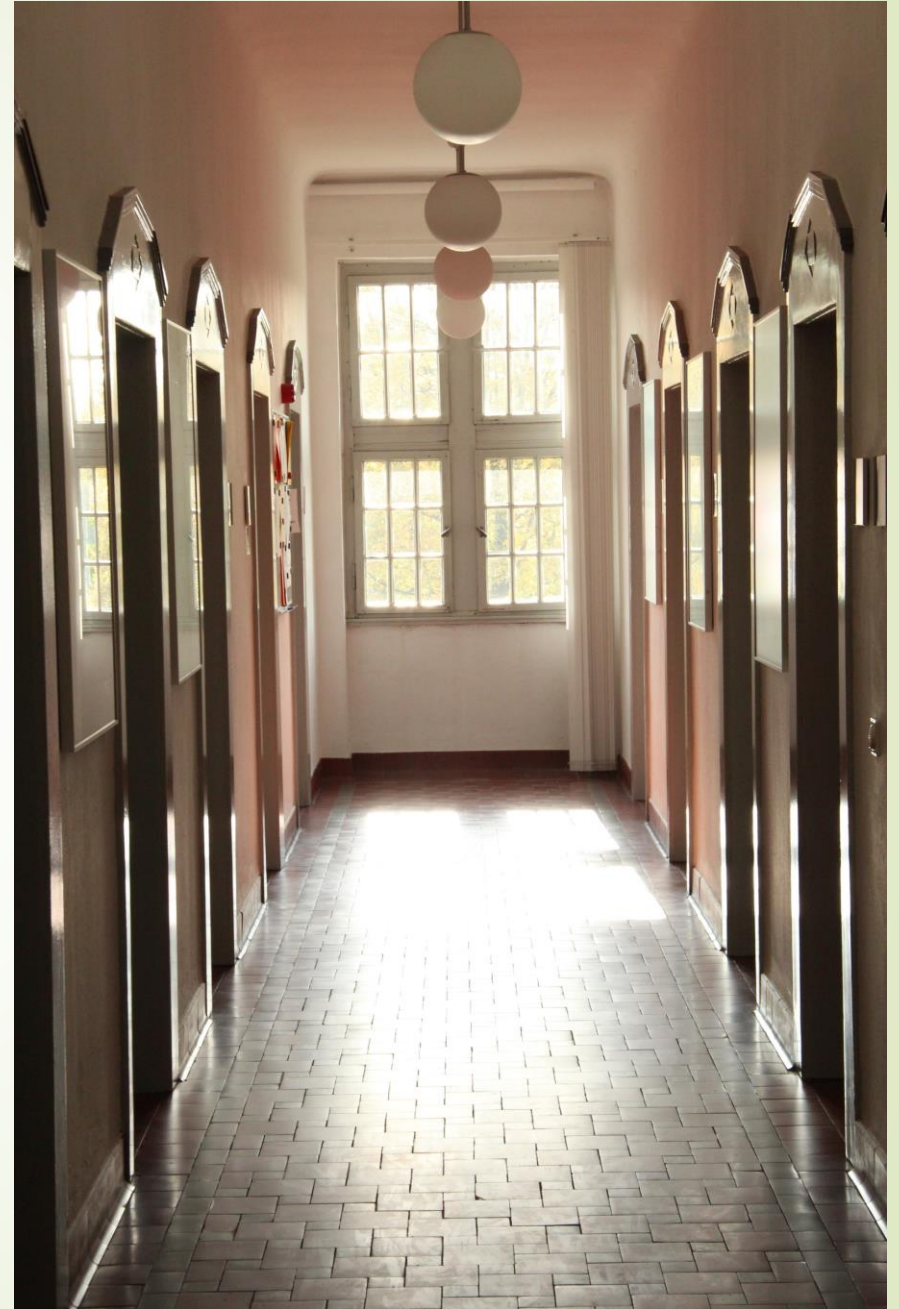
Challenges we face ... maybe you do, too

Few digital interfaces with the public:

- Homepage, 360° view of one building
- facebook page
- Both linked with ENORM, ships included in ENORM list
- used to have additional digital content in the exhibition until private provider went bankrupt

Benefits

- Empty office rooms
- All-encompassing traineeship
- Lots of creative freedom





New strategy

- Don't provide a service, don't sell a product. Provide access to sources and to the location
- Invest in mutually beneficial cooperations
- Don't re-invent the wheel, participate in existing structures
- Build ENORM as a brand, profit from the visibility of the network



Next steps

- Expand library and archive into empty office rooms
- Acquire mini-jobbers/student workers for work on the collection
- organize fewer events and temporary exhibitions yourself, open your house for others
- Migrate Database from Faust 7 to DigiCult Web, create an open online interface for the public
- make PR part of traineeship, including Facebook, Youtube and Wikipedia/Wikimedia. Have ENORM repost everything to a wider audience